

House Republican Press Release

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Graduated License Bill Passes House



HARTFORD- Legislation cosponsored by Representative Kevin Witkos (R-Canton) which places restrictions on sixteen and seventeen-year-old drivers passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives today.

The new bill fine-tunes previously enacted law over the past few legislative sessions. The new bill increases the mandated hours behind the wheel for driver training from eight hours to twenty hours, and eliminates restrictions on the age of parents who are passengers in a motor vehicle operated by a sixteen or seventeen-year old, but requires at least one of them to hold an operators license. It also prohibits a sixteen or seventeen-year old who has an operator's license from driving between midnight and 5:00 a.m. unless the person is driving for work, school or religious activity, or out of medical necessity. Exemptions are made for ambulance, fire and EMS personnel who are sixteen or seventeen years of age.

An amendment that Representative Witkos introduced clarifies the ability of young drivers working as emergency services personnel was adopted by the House, and made a part of the bill.

"Young drivers who are inexperienced pose a clear risk to themselves and to other drivers while they are in the early stages of gaining driving experience," said **Representative Witkos**. "This legislation will help to more adequately ease new drivers into their responsibilities as motorists."

Statistics have demonstrated conclusively that the first few months of a new driver's licensure are critical, and is the period of time when a new driver is most likely to get into a fatal accident. Quite often, the other young occupants in their car distract these young new drivers. According to data compiled by the State Department of Transportation 16 and 17-year-old drivers are 14% more likely to cause a crash resulting in fatalities or injuries while transporting one passenger than while driving alone.

A survey of the 17th district which Representative Witkos did in 2003 showed that 88% of respondents supported a night curfew for drivers age seventeen and younger. The bill, ***HB 5446, An Act Concerning Additional Training and Restrictions for Drivers Under the Age of Eighteen***, will now head to the state Senate for approval by that chamber.

